

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Controversy swirls around NAMB head

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A trustee of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) has expressed concern about rumors that other trustees are planning to seek the removal of NAMB president Geoff Hammond during a meeting of the board's executive committee scheduled for Aug. 11 in Atlanta.

Concern about the possibility of that action led other trustees to request the meeting be changed to a special called meeting of the entire board.

In an e-mail dated July 29, Jason Pettus, pastor of Living Hope Church in Bowling Green, Ky., told other trustees that the previous day he had received a telephone call and an e-mail from other trustees, saying they had heard about an effort to remove Hammond.

Pettus said he and the other two trustees agreed to pray for Hammond. "After praying throughout the day, I recalled our chairman, Tim Patterson, telling us in May at our spring meeting to contact him if we had any questions or concerns," Pettus wrote in the e-mail, which was sent to Baptist Press by someone who had received it. "I had both, so I called Tim. He was meeting with Geoff Hammond when I called, but he called me back on his way home."

"I shared with Tim what I had been told ... I asked him if indeed the executive committee was planning and seeking the removal of [Geoff] Hammond as president of NAMB at their next meeting on August 11," Pettus wrote. "He told me that he did not know if that would be the outcome, but that he and the executive committee had several 'serious issues' that they needed to talk with Geoff about."

Now other trustees have asked the Aug. 11 meeting become a called meeting of the entire trustee body, said NAMB spokesman Mike Ebert.

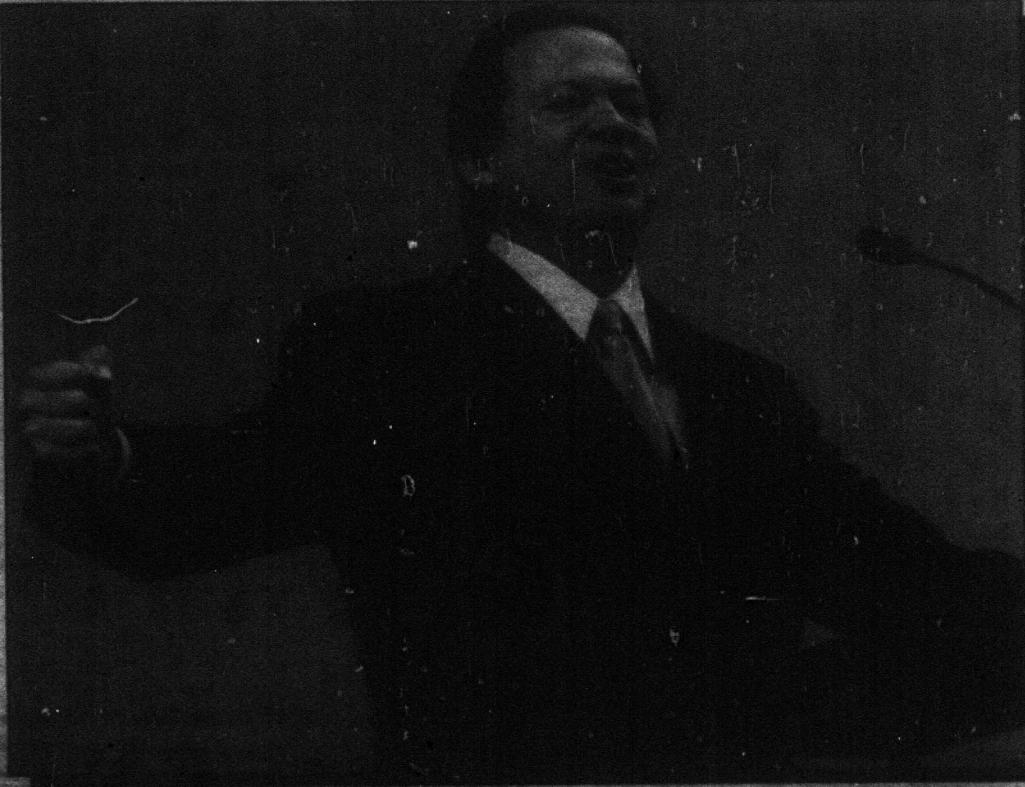
"The topics to be covered at the upcoming Aug. 11 meeting of the executive committee of our board of trustees are issues being discussed among our trustees," Ebert said in a statement prepared for Baptist Press. "NAMB's president, Geoff Hammond, recently asked the chairman of our board of trustees if there was anything he could do to prepare for the meeting, as is standard protocol, and he was told there was not."

"Some of our trustees have expressed concerns about what is to be discussed in the Aug. 11 executive committee meeting," Ebert added. "In accordance with NAMB trustee bylaws, they have requested a specially called meeting of the entire membership of our board of trustees to take place at 9 a.m. on Aug. 11."

The mission entity's bylaws require 20% of its 56 board members agree to call such a meeting before it can be held. At publishing time, it was unclear whether this threshold had been met.

Pettus said Patterson, who is pastor of Hillcrest Church in Jacksonville, Fla., identified three issues some trustees have with Hammond:

- Hammond had stopped meeting with an executive leadership coach trustees had hired to work with him and was seeking a different coach;



**UNDER FIRE?** — Geoff Hammond, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in suburban Atlanta, addresses 350 Southern Baptist church representatives at the second annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Appreciation luncheon on June 23, during the SBC annual meeting in Louisville, Ky. Some NAMB trustees believe Hammond is under fire from key members of the entity's trustee leadership. (BP photo)

- Hammond had hired an administrative associate without consulting trustee leadership; and

- morale among board staff is at "an all-time low and people within the entity and outside of it are unhappy with the way things are going."

"Tim stated that this was an example of problems he and the executive committee had been having with Geoff for 18 months," Pettus wrote. "I shared that I was not aware of any problems any trustees were having with Geoff. It was and is a surprise to me because Tim had made glowing remarks about Geoff at the commissioning service in May and then we as a board affirmed the great job Geoff was doing as our president in May. Tim shared that he had kept these problems from the rest of the trustees for practical reasons. He did not want these problems to be a distraction for us or those that work at the board."

A November 2008 article in *The Christian Index*, news journal of the Georgia Baptist Convention, criticized Hammond's leadership in NAMB's new GPS — God's Plan for Sharing national evangelism initiative and alleged staff morale at the entity was being hurt by micromanagement and a "top-down governing style."

In May 2009, Patterson told *The Florida Baptist Witness* he believed Southern Baptists ought to consider a merging the convention's two mission boards into a "singular world mission agency." Noting

the SBC's declining membership and baptism statistics, Patterson said he had been concerned about the "direction of our denomination for some time."

Later that month, however, Patterson apologized for the way his perspective was shared, saying he did not intend to speak on the board's behalf. He affirmed Hammond as one "who for the past two years has led NAMB with a steady, efficient and effective hand. He has consistently sounded the clarion call that North America is a mission field. And he has done all this with a Christ-like attitude that I have had the privilege to witness firsthand."

In that meeting, trustees unanimously approved a resolution describing NAMB as "an efficient and effective Southern Baptist entity that takes seriously the good stewardship of the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering dollars entrusted to us by Southern Baptists." In that same meeting, trustees unanimously re-elected Patterson for a second year as chairman of the board.

Pettus wrote that he asked Patterson if he was seeking Hammond's removal as president. "Tim said he had no desire to see Geoff removed as president, but that members of the executive committee could pursue Geoff's removal and that he would be serving only as the leader of the meeting and would have to allow the members of the executive committee to pursue what they believed was needed," Pettus wrote.

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In Mississippi Baptist life, as in Christendom as a whole, we are the benefactors of the sacrificial actions and efforts of the spiritual giants who preceded us. They planted this remarkable Baptist garden in which we live, then others watered it, and we live in the blessings of their faithfulness every day.

One of those spiritual giants, among the many Mississippi Baptists have produced, is Margaret McKee Lackey. She was born in 1858 in Copiah County, the fifth of nine children born to James and Elizabeth Lackey. She grew up doing what most girls in Mississippi did in that era. She played games with her friends, went to school, did her chores at home, and attended church.

Margaret Lackey went on to attend Hillman College in Clinton, which we now know as Mississippi College, one of our three Baptist-affiliated institutions of higher learning in the state. She studied to be a teacher and indeed taught for many years in Mississippi schools.

Raised in the Baptist tradition of the day, Lackey — who never married — had a deep love for missions whose goal it was (and is) to spread the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to people who had never heard of the Savior. She used her teaching skills to help the children in her church learn to share her love of missions.

She also utilized her talent as a gifted poet and writer to help Christians understand the importance of missions. She was the author of several studies on missions.

In 1912, Margaret Lackey became the first paid leader of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). Her passion for

missions was obvious to all who met her. She once wrote, "Sisters, we have done passing well this year, but, oh, the untouched multitudes of women and children in Mississippi whose souls are crying silently yet know not for what they are crying."

After a storied career, Margaret Lackey retired in 1930 from her position as corresponding secretary of Mississippi WMU. Many more Mississippi Baptist women, inspired by her model life, have been raised up by the Lord for Kingdom service since then.

In 1903, Margaret Lackey was among those who led Mississippi WMU to begin a special annual observance to emphasize the importance of state missions. That special observance eventually turned into the Season of Prayer for State Missions.

In 1935, the offering taken during the Season of Prayer for State Missions was named in honor of the woman who today remains one of Mississippi Baptists' most outstanding leaders: the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering.

Margaret McKee Lackey died in 1948 just

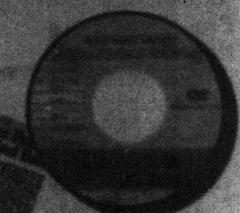
a few days short of her 90th birthday, having during a most memorable time in Mississippi and American history. As a child, she witnessed the Civil War and the privations of Reconstruction. As an adult, she lived through World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. No doubt, her life experiences convinced her of the importance of bringing everyone she could to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The first state mission offering in 1903 received a

total of \$294.38. The 2009 goal for the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering is \$2.15 million. Miss Lackey would be pleased to know that the work in which she so earnestly believed has been carried on in her name for these many years.

Today the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering encompasses a multitude of important state programs, such as Christian camping, church planting, disaster relief, literacy, and volunteer missionary assistance. Gifts to the offering make possible many of the Mississippi Baptist programs that exist today.

Now it's our turn to tend to the garden. May we be found faithful in this and all endeavors we undertake in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and in remembrance of spiritual giants like Margaret Lackey.



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## GUEST OPINION:

### *Motorcycles and missions*

**By Russell Mord, pastor  
First Church, Sturgis**



**A**ugust is noted for many things — barbecue, watermelons, the first day of school, and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Every August on the third weekend of the month, my little town of about 270 people swells in population to tens of thousands of people. The Sturgis Biker Mission revs up its efforts, too.

These thousands come to Sturgis every year riding their motorcycles, to look at more bikes and to have a good time. They want to meet people and, from what I am told, one thing they really enjoy about Sturgis is the small town's easygoing hospitality.

This August marks the 12th anniversary of "The South's Warmest Welcome," the Sturgis South Motorcycle Rally. It also presents an opportunity for you to be involved in a major mission effort to reach thousands of people.

For five years now, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) has invested time, money, and the Gospel in this rally. Last year volunteers from churches around the state and throughout the South helped present the Gospel to well over 10,000 people at Sturgis. We hope to build on that this year.

The Sturgis Biker Mission represents the partnership of MBCB, Golden Triangle Association, and several local churches to present a Gospel witness during the annual rally. Mission partners see a staggering opportunity to reach the nation through this event.

That's because bikers from all professions and parts of the country come to Sturgis. Many of them are looking for a friendly face, and many of them need Jesus. The Sturgis Biker Mission longs to give them both and to encourage them in a faith that will impact their lives and homes.

I have seen this happen for more than a decade. I first became involved in the biker

ministry through the efforts of my home church. During the years since that beginning, I have seen lost people come to Christ and Christians serving the Lord in ways they never thought possible. God has blessed the efforts.

Won't you take part in the blessing this year? There are many ways you can join in the work. In fact, the ministry you can accomplish in Sturgis is only limited by God's Word and your own imagination.

Whether you serve as an individual or as part of a group, you can be involved in one-on-one witnessing, encounters with bikers and bike enthusiasts or in a project of some sort. All that's

really necessary is that you show Jesus to people.

If you want to do that, I beg you to come share in the blessing by sharing Christ with thousands of people. We are recruiting volunteers right now to come and do just that. Would you come and be part of this effort?

A hospitality center for bikers will be located on the Sturgis Church lot. There will be many opportunities to meet people and share Christ. New Testaments, tracts, and vest pins to give to bikers will be provided.

For more information on participating in this work, email me at [rmond@hotmail.com](mailto:rmond@hotmail.com). You may also call the Golden Triangle Association at (662) 328-6802 or the Sturgis Church office at (662) 465-7420. Let us answer your questions and help you begin planning your work.

Materials and orientation will be at Sturgis Church on Highway 12 in Sturgis. Orientation and prayer are set for 7 p.m. on Thursday, August 13. There will also be a continuously running orientation video in the church's fellowship hall on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday.

I hope to see you there!

# Abortion funds remain in committee's bill

WASHINGTON (BP) — A U.S. House of Representatives committee protected abortion services in a proposed government health-care plan July 30 in a turn of events that saw it first approve, then defeat an amendment to prevent required coverage of the lethal procedure.

The committee, however, passed an amendment to provide conscience protections for pro-life health care workers, as well as institutions that refuse to perform abortions.

The panel, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, approved its version of health care reform July 31 before the House began a five-week recess.

The panel considered amendments to America's Affordable Health Choices Act, H.R. 3200, after about two weeks of delays because of disagreements among Democrats. Chairman Henry Waxman, D-Calif., announced July 29 he had reached an agreement with four of the committee's seven Blue Dog Democrats, a coalition of 52 more fiscally conservative members of the majority.

Though liberals protested the agreement, a deal reportedly was agreed upon that salvaged the bill before the recess.

When the panel resumed

consideration of the legislation July 30, mandated abortion coverage remained part of essential health care benefits, but pro-life members gained its removal at one point. The committee reversed that decision later, primarily as the result of a vote switch by one of the Blue Dogs, Rep. Bart Gordon of Tennessee.

The committee voted 31-27 for that amendment — sponsored by Reps. Joe Pitts, R-Pa., and Bart Stupak, D-Mich.

— to bar abortion from being required as part of a basic health benefits package in government and private plans.

Waxman, an abortion rights supporter, voted for the amendment, apparently so he could request a re-vote later. When he called for a new vote, the amendment failed 30-29. Waxman changed his vote, and Gordon also voted no after supporting the same measure earli-

er. In addition, Rep. Zack Space, D-Ohio, voted against the amendment after not recording a vote the first time.

The committee earlier approved in a 30-28 roll call an amendment from Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif., that supposedly maintains current bans on federal funding of abortion. The Family Research Council (FRC) derided it as a "phony compromise," however.

The amendment by Capps, a pro-choice advocate, per-

mits the public health insurance option, which would be paid for by the federal government, to fund elective abortions. It would, though, require the public plan to cover abortions if the Hyde Amendment is overturned, according to FRC. It also would mandate subsidies for plans that include abortion while establishing an accounting device that appears to give the impression government funds will not underwrite abortion, FRC reported.

After the votes July 30, pro-life leaders decried the continued inclusion of abortion in the health care reform plans promoted by President Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress.

"This current health care legislation has quality of life, rather than sanctity of life, fingerprints all over it, from abortion at the beginning of life to euthanasia at the end of life," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. "If abortion is allowed as an essential service under any of these bills, it will be the greatest expansion of abortion since Roe v. Wade."

"Fifty-one percent of Americans now call themselves pro-life, and 71% of Americans say they are opposed to public funding of abortion," Land told Baptist Press. "It's time for all

those Americans to speak up and tell these congressmen how displeased they are with their votes."

FRC President Tony Perkins, who is no relation to William Perkins, editor of The Baptist Record, called the legislation "one huge abortion edict."

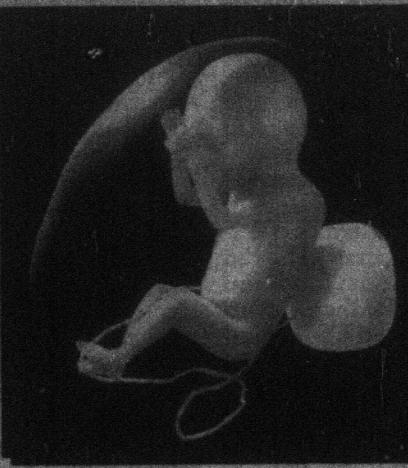
"It has been clear to many that the health bills moving through Congress would fund abortion services and mandate coverage for abortion, jumping well beyond the current law which prohibits the funding or subsidizing of abortion," he said in a written statement. "While many abortion proponents claimed we were incorrect in our conclusions, even the most strident deniers would have to agree the amendment offered by Rep. Capps puts the matter to rest."

Stupak and Pitts were successful in achieving adoption of a conscience clause amendment. The language, approved by a voice vote, would prevent discrimination against any doctor, medical professional, hospital, health care facility, or insurance plan that "does not provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions."

The 30-29 roll call vote that resulted in defeat of the Pitts-Stupak amendment to prevent mandated abortion coverage found all 23 Republicans and 6 Democrats in support. In addition to Stupak, the other Democrats voting for the pro-life amendment were Reps. John Barrow of Georgia, Baron Hill of Indiana, Jim Matheson of Utah, Charlie Melancon of Louisiana, and Mike Ross of Arkansas.

Two other House committees — Education and Labor, as well as Ways and Means — have approved health care legislation without excluding abortion.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has urged voters to contact their members of Congress regarding health care legislation by calling the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121; e-mailing them by accessing [www.erlc.com](http://www.erlc.com) and clicking on "Take Action;" or contacting the district office of their congressman or state offices of their senators.



## Benefits OK'd

WASHINGTON (BP) — Legislation extending employee benefits to the same-sex partners of federal workers was approved by a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee July 30. Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was the lone witness to testify against the legislation before the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia earlier in the month. The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act, Page said, discourages marriage, discriminates against unmarried heterosexual couples, and leaves room for widespread fraud and waste. By a 5-3 vote along party lines, the subcommittee agreed to grant homosexual partners of federal employees such benefits as health insurance, retirement, and disability as well as group life insurance and family and medical leave. President Obama, when he endorsed the bill in June, said the legislation was needed to help the government compete with private employers who already offer benefits to same-sex partners. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., said she was delighted by the subcommittee's action because the legislation would ensure the federal government's competitive edge. Subcommittee chairman Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., said the bill promotes "the basic concepts of equity and fairness" while placing the federal government "on par with the private sector, where health insurance, retirement, disability and other benefits are already widely available to domestic partners." Page, though, argued that the bill takes "a direct role in opposition to a traditional definition and support of that which marriage has traditionally been." Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, said the bill "in many ways seeks to redefine marriage." The cost of extending health benefits alone to the estimated 34,000 same-sex partners of federal employees would be \$60.4 million in the first year, according to the written testimony of Lee Badgett, an economics professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Badgett, who supported the legislation, said the bill would "put the federal government in the mainstream of modern compensation practices." The legislation next will be considered by the full Oversight and Government Reform Committee in the House.

## Looking back

10 years ago

Saudi Arabia is the world's most repressive country for Christians, according to Open Doors International, an organization that ministers to the persecuted church.

20 years ago

First Church, Nettleton, holds a note-burning ceremony for the \$339,000 sanctuary that was completed in 1985. The church used the Together We Build program and had to borrow only \$200,000 for the project. George C. Johnson Jr., pastor.

50 years ago

A new mission, to be called Beach Boulevard Baptist Chapel, begins services August 2 on the grounds of the newly acquired Gulfshore Assembly at Henderson Point near Pass Christian.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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AYQBN YLQM JKQBA KS  
SRFL KD YRA YLQX.

FKVQDA NCLBGL:  
NCLDNI

Clue: P = C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Eleven: Sixteen

## A SQUIRREL CLIMBING AN IRON POST

Although squirrels are creative, innovative, and often ingenious, they cannot climb iron posts. The other day I saw a group of squirrels — six or seven of them — digging, playing, and running around within just a few feet of each other. I did not want to disturb them, but as I got closer to where they were, one of them who looked like a really young squirrel got scared. He ran and jumped on a traffic signpost. As quickly as he went up he came back down. He was not at all discouraged. He jumped back up, leaped on the pole once again, and failed again. As I chuckled at the futility of his getaway plan, the third time he scampered off he went to a nearby tree, and up and away he went. Not even a squirrel, as adept as they are at climbing, can get up an iron post.

There are some lessons to be learned from watching this squirrel. While squirrels are ingenious in a lot of ways, they apparently are not all knowing, or else this squirrel would have known not to try what he did and definitely not to try it the second time. It would do us all a world of good if we knew more than we do and more importantly if we could learn from our failures. Most of us are like that little furry yard creature. We attempt what cannot be done. Consider with me how children and more especially their parents can learn from this squirrel episode.

How many times have you seen parents trying to shape and even force their children to be what they cannot be or do what they cannot do? Do you remember that verse in Proverbs that says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6)? The way he should go literally could be translated and certainly interpreted to mean *train the child in the direction that God has focused his life*. You see it all of the time. You may notice it in other parents and maybe not recognize it in yourself. You see dads and even moms who want their children to be world-class athletes.

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## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

I think it is one thing to encourage a child to participate in sports and it is totally another thing when you push them, harass, and harangue them to reach beyond their interest and far beyond their ability.

Maybe it is not in the area of sports but in beauty contests or maybe even in academics. I certainly am aware that kids can pretend to be dumb and can openly demonstrate their giftedness at being lazy. Still, as a child grows, the parent's responsibility is to help that child find their giftedness. I never knew what any of our kids would be when they were growing up, but the one thing that we always wanted them to be was what the Lord wanted them to be. I thought that each of them could do anything and everything that they wanted to do, but I clearly knew that God had a plan for their lives, and I wanted them to know that and to do His will. So now one is a teacher, one is a nurse, and one is a preacher. The bottom line is to encourage the child to do what God has directed them to do and not spend all of your time trying to teach them to climb iron posts.

Growing up, I had a buddy who was the son of a man who almost made it to the pros in baseball. When he did not quite get there, he then turned to his son who surely would make it big. The son inherited a great deal from his mother, who was a very intelligent lady but who had very little baseball skill. The boy hardly had enough skill to make the high school team, and the older he got, it was apparent that his dad was disappointed in him. The boy had enough sense to be a brain surgeon, but his dad did not have enough sense to stop trying to teach him to climb iron posts.

Think about this experience as it might be applied to churches and their pastors. I certainly

am aware of the fact that it is not easy to be a leader and to be a pastor of a congregation. Leading them forward is and always has been a difficult task. It is a struggle under the best of conditions. So many people may not want anybody to lead them.

Many of them do not want to be fed the Word of God because they have not developed an appetite. Some do not want to grow and improve because they had just as soon stay right where they are or ever regress. Into this mix, God places pastors who will spend a great deal of time and energy trying to get folks to move forward and to grow. So the pastor tries everything he can and sometimes, if not a great deal of the time, it feels like a squirrel climbing an iron post.

I do believe that God wants us to exercise our gifts in His kingdom work, and oftentimes that means that we should be creative and innovative in try-

ing to lead God's people forward — but there is a fine line between creativity and stupidity. So it is that I have watched pastors trying to climb the iron posts of church life all to no avail. They have fought over times for the services, whether or not to eat in church, or to sing from a certain songbook. I imagine if the truth were known we have all been squirrels on an iron post at times. Sometimes it is at home, other times at the job, or just in the midst of relationships. So what should we do? Well, I have two simple suggestions.

*One is do not keep on doing it!* I am all for tenacity and commitment that will not let go, but sometimes there are things and moments when you realize that this is not going to get done. *The second thing that I would suggest is when you jump on an iron post and slide down or bounce off, do not be real quick in jumping up to do it again.* Get your breath, look up, and pause to ask the Lord what He would have you to do. You may hear Him say something like don't try that again, and then He will point you in a new direction.

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# Same sex marriage opponents get 100K signatures

AUGUSTA, Maine (BP) — Opponents of Maine's same-sex marriage law turned in an eye-opening 100,000 signatures to the secretary of state Friday in their attempt to overturn the law, a total that is nearly double the amount required and one that may signal trouble for the law in the left-leaning state.

Needing only 55,000 valid signatures, the pro-family coalition known as Stand for Marriage Maine unloaded the petitions off a truck at a morning press conference. If enough signatures are validated, which seems near-certain, Maine citizens will decide in November whether to reject or keep the new law. A "yes" vote will reject the law.

The effort is a result of Maine's unique People's Veto law, which allows citizens to gather signatures in an attempt to overturn laws passed by the legislature. The same-sex marriage law has not gone into effect and won't do so until citizens have a say, assuming it qualifies.

Maine may not be the sole focus of pro-family groups this fall. In Washington state, a coalition known as Protect Marriage Washington turned in 138,000 signatures July 25 in hopes of overturning that state's recently passed domestic partnerships law, which provides same-sex couples all the legal benefits of marriage, minus the name.

The group needed 120,000 signatures and won't know for days or several weeks if they were successful. The law has not taken effect.

If one or both efforts qualify for the ballot, it will be a good gauge of the status of the homosexual rights movement in two mostly liberal states. A victory in either state, and particularly in Maine, would be a huge boon for social conservatives.

Including the landmark vote in California last fall, same-sex marriage has lost in every state in which it has gone to the ballot. The signatures were submitted in Maine one day after the pro-same-sex marriage group Maine Freedom to Marry said 60,000 people had signed an online pledge declaring their support of the new law.

The number of signatures collected in Maine impressed even veteran observers. Michael Heath, executive director of the conservative Maine Family Policy Council, said the total was more than he expected.

"We've done two People's Vetoes in the past in which we gathered close to 70,000 signatures and it took us three months," he told Baptist Press. "...This was done in a month. I think it's fair to characterize it as an indication that the people of Maine don't want same-sex marriage."

The involvement of churches of all stripes was crucial and will be so again this fall during a statewide debate on the issue.

Joey Marshall, pastor of Living Stone Community Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Standish, Maine, said that Catholics, Protestants, and conservative

citizens have come together on the issue. "God has truly blessed" the effort, he said.

"There has been such an outpouring of support for the People's Veto because this marriage law not only affects those claiming to gain equality," Marshall told Baptist Press, "but it also changes society forever by degrading the traditional family values that Mainers have been trying to instill in their children for years. People are crying out because government should not legislate something that the people do not support."

The signature drive, Marshall said, "proves that this grassroots effort to protect marriage will stand and fight to the very end."

"In the end, if over 50% of the people want to protect marriage, praise God," he said. "However, if over 50% choose to support the gay marriage law, then at least the people of Maine had a voice in the decision making process."

Opponents of the new law warn it will weaken religious freedoms and parental rights and lead to the requirement of same-sex marriage being taught in school as morally acceptable, as has happened in Massachusetts, where it is legal.

A Pan Atlantic SMS Group poll of 400 Maine adults in April found that given three options, 39% supported same-sex marriage, 34.5% supported same-sex civil unions, and 23% opposed all legal recognition for homosexual couples.

"Thirty out of 30 times the people have had the chance to vote, they've spoken:

Marriage is the union of a husband and wife," Brian Brown, executive director of the National Organization for Marriage, wrote in an e-mail to constituents. "...What Maine will prove to the doubting Thomases and the politicians standing on the sideline is that there is no

majority for gay marriage anywhere in these United States."

For information on the Maine effort, visit [www.standformarriagemaine.com](http://www.standformarriagemaine.com). For information on the Washington effort, visit [www.protectmarriagewa.com](http://www.protectmarriagewa.com).

## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Elam Church, Coffeeville: 150th anniversary, May 23, 2010; anyone with information about the church contact Mary Nell Lowrimore @ 1837 CR139, Coffeeville, MS; (662) 675-2006; or jusnany62@yahoo.com. and Becky Carver, music; Mike Stowell, pastor.
7. Arkadelphia Church, Lauderdale: Homecoming, Aug. 16, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship dinner; Robert Higginbotham, speaker; Dano Rainer, pastor.
8. Concord Church, Ackerman: Homecoming and revival, Aug. 9 - 12; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Ralph Cain, Tim Black, speakers; Roger Griffith, pastor.
9. Juniper Grove, Poplarville: Homecoming, Aug. 9; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; John Gordon, speaker and pastor; Jerry Talley, music.
10. Yockanookany Church, Attala County: Revival, Aug. 12 - 14; Wed. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Thomas Wicker, speaker; Robby Robertson and Jennifer Cagle, music; James Burrell, pastor.
11. Concord Church, Booneville: Revival, Aug. 23 - 27, 7 p.m.; fellowship meal, Sun., 5 p.m.; Randy Isbell, speaker; Robert E. Walker, pastor.
12. Salem Church, Learned: Homecoming and Revival, Aug. 9 - 12; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.



### MISCELLANEOUS

MID-SIZE BAPTIST CHURCH LOOKING for Senior Pastor in Simpson County MS. Call 601-672-2033.

OLD RICE ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, Madison, MS is seeking a part-time youth director. Send resume to Personnel Committee, Old Rice Road Baptist Church, 82 Old Rice Road, Madison, MS 39110. Phone is (601) 853-7500. Submittal deadline is September 1, 2009.

PELAHATCHIE BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a part-time minister of music for worship services and adult choir. Please forward resume to the PBC search committee, attention: Due McKinion, P.O. Box 876, Pelahatchie, MS 39145, email due@rankincounty.org.

FBC, HORN LAKE, MISS., IS SEEKING resumes for a senior pastor, no later than August 31, 2009. Please mail to 3505 Goodman Road, Horn Lake, MS 38637.

## JONES COUNTY 2009 BIBLE CONFERENCE

August 16 - 18

Salem Heights Baptist Church  
601-763-7571 - 5850 Hwy 84 West

Featured Speakers

Sunday, August 16,  
9:00 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.  
Dr. John Sullivan  
and Dr. Jimmy Draper

Monday, August 17,  
6:30 P.M.  
Dr. Paige Patterson

Tuesday, August 18,  
6:30 P.M.  
Dr. Junior Hill

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CONDOS IN GATLINBURG FOR RENT: 2 bedrm, 2 bath, full kitchen, walking distance to parkway, \$70.00/nite. Call for information 271-855-4469 or 832-922-0101/0141. Email pdhw4760@att.net.

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

5. Anthony

6. Irby and Latham

7. Shiloh Church, Big Creek

8. Hand and Bass

9. County Line Church, Union

1. North Columbia Church, Columbia, held a dedication service July 19 for their newly constructed activity building.

2. Elam Church, Coffeeville, is hosting a Gospel singing Aug. 29, 6 p.m., featuring Fishers of Men.

3. Cleary Church, Florence, will host Aaron Odom in concert Aug. 9, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received.

4. Missionaries Richard and Martha Beal (Venezuela) are on stateside assignment until March 2010 at 425 Ford St., Columbia, MS. They can be reached at (601) 736-2640 or (412) 620-3863.

5. Mitch Anthony, a member of Slayden Church, Lamar, shared experiences from youth mission trips to Mission Arlington (Texas) and Chicago.

6. The RAs of Branch Church, Morton, sponsored a men's ministry supper in June, preparing a meal for 20 men in the church. Shown are Zachary Irby and Michael Latham, RAs who helped with the dinner.

7. Shiloh Church, Big Creek, had several youth participate in the MissionFuge camp at Mississippi College June 22 - 27. Shown are Kacie Jones; Jessica Durham; Ashley and Emily Davis; Casey Rounsville; Chance; Jonathan and Josh Simmons. Leaders were Jerry and Shannon Durham.

8. Fellowship Church, Taylorsville, licensed Stevie Hand to the ministry May 24, and he can be reached at (601) 613-6899 or 319-0256. Shown are Hand and pastor Carey Bass.

9. Children from County Line Church, Union, attended camp at Lake Forest Ranch this summer. Shown are the participants.

10. Johns Church, Brandon, recently elected four deacons with three being first time ordinations. Shown are Faron Kilburn, Mike Wond, Tommy Struchen, and C.T. Henry, with pastor Jeff Harrison.

11. Johns Church, Brandon, recently celebrated the dedication of six babies and two children. Shown are the parents and children with pastor Jeff Harrison, far right.

12. Stronghope Church, Wesson, honored Don Cagle for 50 years of service as a deacon. Shown are Cagle and pastor Robin Richer.



10. Deacon ordination, Johns Church, Brandon



11. Children's dedication, Johns Church, Brandon



12. Cagle and Richer

## STAFF CHANGES

1. First Church, Verona, has called Kenneth Leslie as minister of music and students June 14. He was ordained to the gospel ministry July 12. He comes from Mount Olive Church, Prentiss County. Shown are pastor Gary Roberson and Leslie.

2. Temple Church, Petal, has called John David Patterson as pastor. He comes with his wife, Pamela, son Lil John, and daughters Rebecca and Hannah.

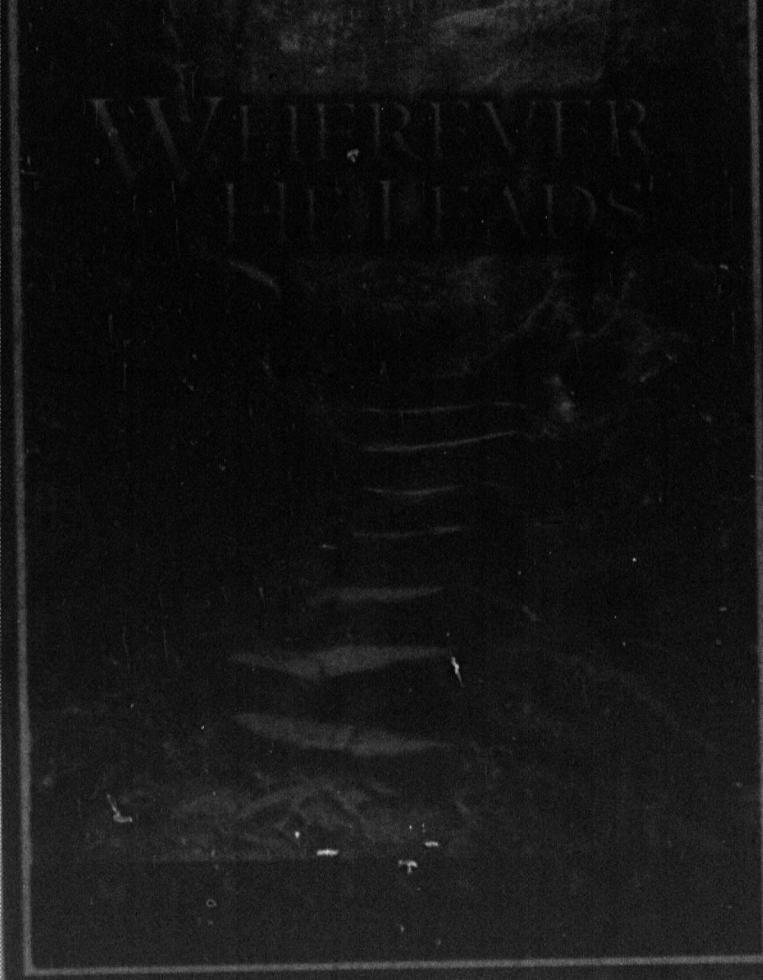


1. Roberson and Leslie

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## MARGARET LACKEY STATE MISSIONS OFFERING...



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

Devon Aire Savings and Loan and  
State of Mississippi are proud to support  
the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering.

# WHENEVER

## Contemporary church plant spreads unchanging Gospel message

By Britney Cloyd  
*Correspondent*

In 1 Cor 9:22, the Apostle Paul writes, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Church plants across Mississippi, like LifePointe Church in Amory, take this message to heart as they seek non-traditional ways of doing church.

LifePointe Church opened in a former auto parts store in January 2008, with a relaxed environment to match its location. Pastor Rob Westbrook encourages members and visitors to attend the contemporary, full-band worship services in casual dress.

"LifePointe is a new way of thinking and doing church. The Gospel message has not changed, just the methods," he noted.

Westbrook, who left his hometown of Amory over ten years ago to attend seminary, originally thought he would plant churches in an urban areas. Then he discovered that over 14,000 people in his home county were either "unchurched" or "de-churched" especially young couples with small children.

"Just as many people need Christ here," Westbrook said. "We're in a very traditional area. We're the only Baptist church in our county with our kind of worship. We're in a pretty small town, so we have to expand our demographics and cross all boundaries."

LifePointe Church seemed to be just what the unchurched in Amory were looking for. They now have an average of 125 in attendance each Sunday,

including as many as 20 people over the age of 65.

"We've seen entire families come to know the Lord and be baptized," said Westbrook. "They are not an advertisement because they bring in no people," he added.

To meet the needs of this growing group of people, LifePointe Church offers multiple Bible studies geared toward young adults. "We don't have many organized ministries. We just find a need and jump in. We want to change the community. Our goal is to reach as many people as we can to impact as much as possible," Westbrook said.

LifePointe receives financial, construction, and prayer support from First Church, Amory. "I presented the vision, and they saw it as a way to participate in missions," Westbrook said.

Mississippi Baptists have formed 74 new churches

since 2002, according to Ed Demetrikis, Director of Church Planting for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

"The Margaret Ladday State Mission Offering provides financial support to start approximately 12 churches per year in matching funds for church plants in Mississippi," Demetrikis said. It also helps financially sustain 6-80 starts annually, he said.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention partners with Mississippi's church planting department to provide networking materials and training resources for church-planting leadership teams.

For more information on church planting in Mississippi, contact Pastors' Council PO Box 550 Jackson MS 39205-0550, telephone 662-322-0224 or toll-free outside Jackson 800-346-1651, or visit [www.namb.org](http://www.namb.org).

Cloyd is a graduate of Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain College in Olive Branch and currently serves as a teacher in Carter City, Tenn.



## Hitting rock bottom: inmates in newfound faith

By Britney Cloyd  
*Correspondent*

Having had his religious journey even as most people do not, Steve Johnson, 42, was born again while serving time at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Parchman. Inmates of all faiths throughout the facility, "I had never been around people like me before. I had no one to talk to."

One of the longest, but least-known stories of conversion is that of three young men from the same neighborhood who grew up together and still live there.

"I grew up with them. They're still in the neighborhood. They're still in the same house. They're still in the same neighborhood," said Steve Covell, 42, of the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

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Johnson, 42, having criminal justice interests and able to assist that group of people, inmates and ex-offenders, the enforcement officers, inmates and family members.

"I work a lot of days and evenings, but I'm not afraid to do it," he said.

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Teachers, coaches through 12th grade, home school, Saturday school, weekend Bible schools, and a variety of adult disciplemaking training class.

"I always have a heart for those inmates because I was never born free and provided for state funds to go to college," he said.

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# LIVE LEADS

## S. Carolina churches find ministry in Miss.

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

"I led my first person to Jesus today."

This statement from a young lady, shared with Eddie Jones, pastor of the First Baptist, Jackson, West Campus, was one small but crucial element of an outreach effort in Jackson July 12-17.

In an amazing show of cooperation among churches in two different states, seven churches — Sisk Memorial Church and First Church, both of Ft. Mill, S.C.; Temple Church and Lakewood Church, Rock Hill, S.C.; and New Beginnings, First Church West Campus, and Oak Forest Church, all of Jackson, joined forces and resources to impact inner city areas of metropolitan Jackson.

The numbers tell only part of the story. During the days of cooperative ministry, 185 people prayed to receive Christ July 16. Eighty-eight professions of faith were made at Oak Forest/New Beginnings. The rest of the professions of faith were made at Poinciana Elementary School and Jess Brown Park in Jackson as a result of block parties. All total, there were 590 professions of faith recorded. Jones was left with 500 names, addresses, and telephone numbers for follow-up. The group from South Carolina also left the names and addresses of 88 who were saved in the Oak Forest/New Beginnings neighborhood.

How did this come to be?

Larry Harrison, pastor of Sisk Memorial Church, tells the story.

"A friend of mine owned an inflatable [games] company," said Harrison. "I shared with her a vision of how we might reach inner city kids. She gave us a 15 x 15-foot moonwalk. Another friend gave us two more inflatables, a 30-foot slide and an obstacle course. Before long we were given two more inflatables, a trailer, a popcorn machine, a cotton candy machine, and a nacho machine.

"So the question was, do we just play with this or do we do evangelism?" Harrison asked. "We did our first block party in Hamilton, Ohio, and had 172 saved. We realized that this was what God wanted us to do, to use what we'd been given to do inner city ministry."

Larry called in January and said "We're looking for a city where we can do our ministry," said David Michel, associate executive director for mission strategy at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). "I connected him with Eddie Jones and Robert Washington (pastor of the New Beginnings Church), who have been two of our church planters, and they were the gatekeepers for the whole week."

"We brought a team down to assess the situation," said Harrison, "and we knew this was where we were to do ministry. We got our four South Carolina churches together, and the Lord provided over \$22,000 to get the team of 88 together. They don't have to spend anything — we provide the hotel, we provide the



food, and the churches we visit don't have to provide anything."

Out of the 88 who participated in the effort from South Carolina, there were 12 who had never led anyone to Christ. "Now, all 12 have," said Harrison. "I'm just overwhelmed in my own heart for the needs we've found in this community."

"We've already started on the follow-up from this," said Jones. "We have multiple names in the computer, and we're still collecting addresses. Of course, a lot of the folks we've reached are homeless. We share Christ with them and ask them to come celebrate with us at the church. You can't be passive; you have to stay on top of things."

As a special treat for the people in the Oak Forest neighborhoods and in recognition for the graciousness of Oak Forest Church, the South Carolina group prepared 200 pounds of barbecue. The group also set up their inflatables and cranked up the hot dog, nacho, snow cone, cotton candy, and other machines. Other activities included face painting and basketball. It looked like a carnival midway. "Everything we do is intentional evangelism," said Harrison. "We play, we feed them — we've given away more than \$100 hot dogs this week."

Washington, who pastors the New Beginnings African-American congregation, which includes the predominantly white First Baptist Church faculty, said, "I've seen people I've witnessed to get involved in church, and we want them to get a commission to serve. I just need them to be open-minded. What the people I work with need to understand is that God is not a

color other than His blood, so I have to help the black folks understand the structure of the church. People need to get saved, and then we have to do our work of follow-up. Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

"Everybody was just so welcoming and accommodating," said Gil Bailey, a member of Sisk Memorial Church. "We gave away hot dogs and snow cones at the block party at Poinciana Elementary School, and that's the way we get started building relationships," said his wife Dawn.

"People are hurting so bad, they are ready to hear about God," said Bailey. "One lady told me she was so far in sin that she didn't think she could even talk to Jesus. I helped her see that Jesus was ready to hear from her and to help her."

The South Carolina group provided much-needed manpower and resources, and it was Jones and Washington who facilitated the work with local folks and organized the outreach events. Both men are church planters, having been trained through equipping provided by the MBCB Church Planting Department. The church planting ministry is funded largely by the Margaret Lacy State Missions Offering. Both churches have received funds through the offering.

"We were here all week with these seven churches," said Washington. "Think about it — seven churches in one place in one accord. Who knows what is going to happen next? It is just like Pentecost."

"I've been starting churches for 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this," Washington stated.



## State Goal - \$2,150,000

Many churches have chosen to support the state goal by dedicating their offering to the Lauderdales.

**Cross Cultural Outreach - \$50,000**  
Trains leaders to teach other people to read and speak English, providing an open door for sharing the Gospel message. For information call Paula Smith at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**Cross Cultural Outreach - \$50,000**  
Recognizes the various linguistic, ethnic, and cultural groups in Mississippi, and offers gospel insight through leadership training, and mission strategies. For information call David Michael at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**Disaster Relief - \$60,000**  
Over 20 members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Team work with communities as first responders to give care and hope in crisis. For information call Jim Didlake at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**College & University Outreach - \$50,000**  
Provides program assistance for campus ministry to International and African-American students, and missions mobilization assistance for those involved in campus and church student ministries. For information, contact Weaver McCracken at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**Language Ministry - \$10,000**  
Trains leaders to teach other people to read and speak English, providing an open door for sharing the Gospel message. For information call Paula Smith at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**Pastoral Benevolence - \$20,000**  
Provides financial relief and counseling for ministers and their families recovering from professional turmoil. For information call Steve Stone at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

**Volunteer Missionary Assistance - \$600,000**  
Assists short-term volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches to serve in North American and International Missions. For information call Ken Rhodes at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3236.

## Lauderdale Association churches making disciples in Caribbean

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

Lauderdale Association in Meridian is in the midst of reaching far beyond their local boundaries in east Mississippi, and new believers are being added in the process.

After much prayer and discussion, the association decided to establish a special, long-term mission commitment to developing believers in the Dominican Republic province of Santiago Rodriguez.

The Dominican Republic shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti to the west.

"The people there are very engaging and open to discussing religion," said Greg Massey, pastor of Central Church, Meridian. "You won't get down the street without being invited in for a visit."

Massey served 14 years as a Southern Baptist missionary to Argentina and speaks fluent Spanish. That's a good thing, since Spanish is the predominant language of the Dominican Republic.

Danny Davis, pastor of Mt. Olive Church in Lauderdale Association, has made the long journey to Santiago Rodriguez, which involves flying from New Orleans to Miami and then on to the Dominican Republic. Once there, a long, bumpy ride over rudimentary roads is also required.

It's worth the trip to Davis, however. "The people there have a very positive image of Americans. They are baseball fans, of course. Being an American opens doors."

Lauderdale Association teams have made 16 trips to Santiago Rodriguez since August 2007, with the goal of having eight to 12 trips per year for the foreseeable future. Most teams optimally consist of six to eight people.

"Our commitment is for ten to 12 years, until we see the Great Commission being achieved," Davis said.

Subsistence agriculture is the way most residents of Santiago Rodriguez make a living, growing beans, rice, plantains, and tropical fruits. On Saturdays, the residents head to market with their produce.

The average resident lives on about \$80 per month, which is considerably better than the \$30 per month that the average Haitian earns on the other side of the island.

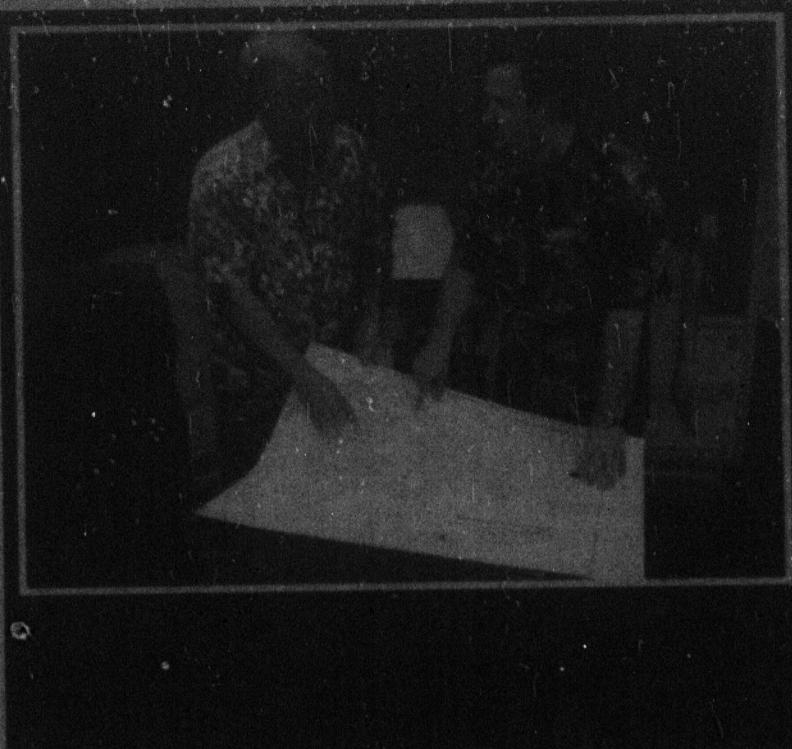
The Lauderdale Association teams have taken a somewhat unique approach to the challenges of winning Santiago Rodriguez for Jesus Christ. "We said from the beginning that we wanted to make disciples, not converts," Massey pointed out.

To that end, the Lauderdale Association mission effort in the Dominican Republic does not building church buildings in quick two-week trips, pay salaries for local pastors and ministers, nor otherwise contribute in ways that would make the new Christians there dependent on the Americans.

"We want to make new disciples, who will then make their own churches and raise up their own leaders. We want them to be independent, self-sustaining, not dependent on aid that may not be there some day," Massey said.

The Lauderdale Baptists have their work cut out for them. Santiago Rodriguez has about 120,000 residents and is predominantly Roman Catholic. Santeria, a form of voodoo, is also practiced throughout the region.

There is virtually no Baptist presence in the province and surrounding area.



"We want to make a clear Gospel presentation," Massey said. "We engage in evangelism, prayer walking, Bible storying, and especially discipleship while we're there."

Making those disciples won't come easy. "The challenge for them is to leave the Catholic Church, which is a big step for them socially and culturally. They've been taught that evangelicals are a cult," Massey said.

Still, people are being won to Christ, and the Lauderdale missionaries are making progress. Massey believes the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering plays a significant role in their undertaking.

"The importance of the Margaret Lackey Offering is huge," Massey said. "Ken Rhodes, director of the Missions Mobilization Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), has been a great help to us through the gifts of Mississippi Baptists to the Margaret Lackey Offering."

Massey said the assistance provided to Lauderdale Association by MBCB and the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Richmond, Va., is a superb example of the vertical integration needed to help local churches realize their mission visions.

Both Massey and Davis point out that the association's mission vision for Santiago Rodriguez has revitalized many of the local churches that have chosen to participate.

"Over 20 of the 46 churches in Lauderdale Association have participated in the trips. There's so much energy and enthusiasm, we believe we're two years ahead of where we thought we'd be at this point," Davis said.

"Our plan hinges on God. We can't do this on our own," Massey said. "We have focused on prayer and praise for what He has done thus far and will do in the future through His believers in Lauderdale Association."

The association's dream is to have a church established within a year in Santiago Rodriguez that will be able to reproduce itself throughout the province and the country.

"People are meeting in groups now, studying the Bible, but we won't be finished until we see a church planting movement. We're in this for the long haul," Massey said.

What will Lauderdale Association do after that monumental task is done? That's already been decided.

"We'll move on to the next spot God has for us," Davis declared.

# Toll rises from July church bus accident near Meridian

JACKSON, Ms. (BP and local reports) — Maggie Lee Henson, the 12-year-old girl who was pinned under a church bus when it crashed July 12 near Meridian, died Aug. 2 after struggling three weeks with severe head injuries and brain trauma.

"At 6:30 pm tonight, our precious Maggie Lee was carried into the arms of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," her father, John Henson, wrote on her Caring Bridge webpage.

"For these last three weeks, she fought for her life courageously, with the skillful help of the medical staff at Batson Children's Hospital here in Jackson," Henson wrote. "She was blessed to have thousands of people praying and pulling for her. We celebrate her eternal life in the presence of her Creator tonight."

Henson, who is associate pastor for emerging ministries at First Church in Shreveport, La., said he and others gathered around the seventh grader to pray.

Maggie Lee was the second child to die from the accident, which occurred July 12 when about 30 youth and adults from

First Church, Shreveport, were traveling to a camp in Georgia. A tire on the bus blew out, causing it to flip several times.

Brandon Ugate, 14, died shortly after the crash. Maggie Lee was trapped under the bus and was one of three of the injured who were airlifted to Jackson for treatment.

For weeks, Maggie Lee's parents posted Caring Bridge updates as people left messages of encouragement in the webpage's guestbook.

By Monday morning, more than 215,000 visits to the Caring Bridge page had been logged. The Shreveport Times noted one message posted by someone from North Carolina which said, "Words can not express how we, perfect strangers to you, have been so pressed to think about you and pray for you... checking on your family and Maggie Lee's progress at all hours. We grieve with you now, again as perfect strangers, but in the body of Christ."

After her death, Maggie Lee's father wrote, "In keeping with the giving spirit of Maggie Lee, we are currently in the process of determining organ donation."

A Celebration of Life for Maggie Lee was held August 6 at First Church, Shreveport. A private graveside service for family was conducted afterwards.

The bus was carrying the teenagers and adults to Passport youth camp in Macon, Ga., on July 12 when a tire blew out and caused the bus to roll over on Interstate 20 near Meridian.

Two girls, including Maggie Lee, were pinned under the bus when it rolled over. The other unidentified girl who was pinned under the bus has recovered.

When the crash occurred, a unit from the Alabama National Guard happened to be traveling close behind, and the soldiers were able to upright the bus within minutes and provide immediate care.

Churches in the Meridian area rushed to help, including some members of First Church in Meridian. "We had the chief deputy of the county sheriff's department in our church, and he stopped me right after the service because he got texted during the ser-

vice," associate pastor Matt Snowden told BP. "We were able to call the pastor in Shreveport and get on it immediately."

Some of the victims were taken to two hospitals in Meridian, while three of the most severely injured including Maggie Lee went to the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. "We initially helped the church in Shreveport find where everybody was," Snowden said.

Because the victims were from a church youth group, Snowden said there wasn't much need for his church to provide counseling.

"You have built-in counseling mechanisms there already. They're really kind of leaning on each other," he said. "I think the role of the Meridian churches has not been so much direct pastoral care but handling all the junk that has to be handled — the small, practical things."

Fifteenth Avenue Church in Meridian was close to the crash site, so people from that church retrieved scattered luggage and took it to their building until it could be claimed.

Snowden also mentioned Highland Church and Northcrest Church, both in Meridian, as well as a local Methodist church and a Catholic church that were on hand to help.

"I think most of the Baptist churches probably did feel a special kinship, but really all the churches in our community have felt the blow of this," Snowden said.

The Shreveport congregation received word of the accident shortly before the morning worship service, and they rallied in prayer for the victims. That evening, a hymn service included prayer and periodic updates on the injured.

"Our congregation is leaning on our faith and confidence in God, balancing direct action with reliance on the goodness and power of God," Greg Hunt, pastor of First Church, Shreveport, said on the church's website shortly after the crash, commanding volunteers for their "heroic support."

Wayne Smith, pastor of Fifteenth Avenue Church, said people from his church were quick to help because "that's what you do."

## Lifeway special needs camp bringing smiles to special faces

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP) — "Go, Bobby! Go!" Below the blindfold that covered his eyes, a broad grin spread across Bobby Shifflett's face. His classmates laughed and cheered as the 44-year-old Shifflett, who has Down Syndrome, tried to spoon cotton balls into a bowl without being able to see what he was doing.

The uninhibited enthusiasm continued as class members went on to answer Bible lesson questions during Special Friends Vacation Bible School, part of the special needs ministry track offered at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center during a weeklong emphasis on The Power of the Connected Sunday School on July 10-13.

"Have any of you ever shared Jesus with anyone?" teacher Jo Ann Banks asked. "Yes!" replied adult learners who had disabilities ranging from intellectual disabilities to autism to genetic disorders.

"He died on the cross for our sins, so we could have eternal life," said Rob Powell, 39, in a strong, matter-of-fact voice. Powell has Williams syndrome, a rare neurodevelopmental disorder.

Across the hall, parents, advocates, church members, and Sunday school teachers learned key elements of establishing and improving special needs ministries. The information included tips regarding

ideal space needs, teaching tools and outreach methods.

For some participants, the conference's lively Vacation Bible School was their first opportunity to get hands-on experience in a class full of special needs students.

Dianne Reynolds of Gainesville, Fla., was drawn to the LifeWay conference as leader of a task force to form a special needs ministry at Northwest Church in Gainesville. Her son Jason, 13, has multiple diagnoses, including Charcot-Marie-Tooth, a degenerative nerve disease.

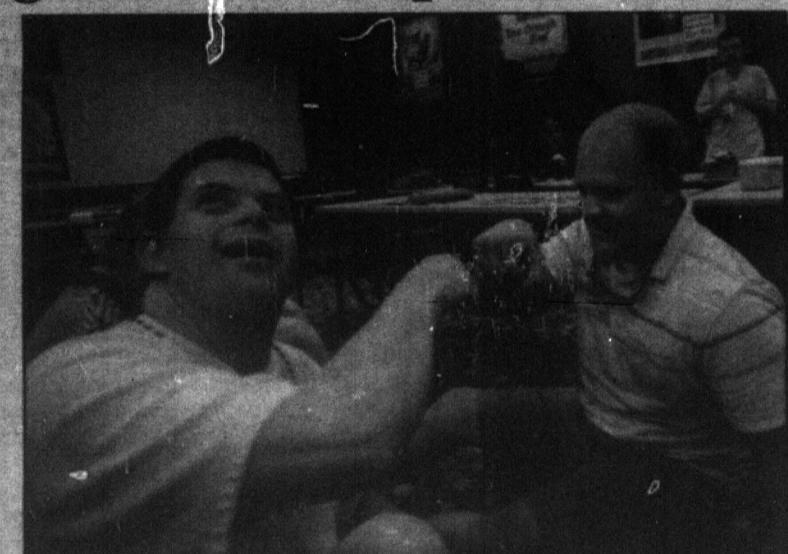
Ronda Bradley of Belmont, N.C., whose daughter has special needs, said she attended the conference to learn more about how churches can reach "the most unreached population in our country."

"Nobody thinks they get it," she said.

"Oh, they get it," said Banks, who started a Special Blessings adult Sunday school class nine years ago at Woodland Hills Church in Asheville, N.C. "We apply it to their everyday lives and we make it fun."

Banks has more than 25 years of experience in special education, leading a troop of Girl Scouts with special needs for 10 years, building a ministry called A.D.A.M. (Adult Disability Activities Ministry), and raising her special-needs daughter, Kelley, who is 30.

Banks has learned that individuals with developmental delays are capable of more than coloring or being



WAY TO GO — Bobby Shifflett (left), shares a fist pump of encouragement with Mr. Scott, a volunteer at the recent Special Friends Vacation Bible School at LifeWay's Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina. (BP photo)

read to during Sunday school. She said purpose emerges as churches learn from them.

"They can have that child-like acceptance we're all supposed to have," observed Ellen Beene, a special needs resources editor at LifeWay. "If you want someone to pray for you without ceasing, tell the special needs class. They also laugh and have fun with a joy that a lot of our adult classes have forgotten."

"They are totally uninhibited when they worship. It doesn't matter if someone is off key."

No one's judging them. Theirs is the most sincere worship I've experienced."

Conference instructor Susan Foster, who writes for LifeWay's Special Buddies curriculum, said, "We're continuing the ministry Jesus started," explaining that Jesus spent a lot of time among people overlooked by mainstream society.

*Editor's note: For more information about special needs ministry resources and events, visit [LifeWay.com/specialneeds](http://LifeWay.com/specialneeds).*

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

1. Liberty Church, Winston Association: July 6 – 10; enrollment, 99; average attendance, 86; five professions of faith.

2. First Church, Rose Hill: Average attendance, 26.

## COLLEGE NEWS

1. Mississippi College's School of Business launched a new economic education center to benefit Jackson area teachers, students and adult learners. The new center will be housed in Self Hall in the School of Business along College Street on the Clinton campus.

2. Michael K. Murphy, D.O., a board certified osteopathic family physician and founding dean of the William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine, was re-elected to the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Board of Trustees during its recent annual business meeting in Chicago.

# Gardening ministry bringing out best in community

OLD HICKORY, Tenn. (BP) — Members of First Church in Old Hickory, Tenn., plowed ground and sowed seeds this past spring in anticipation of a harvest of zucchini, squash, lettuce, radishes — and relationships.

It all started a little over a year ago as part of the church's refocusing effort, Pastor Jud Hays said. A community needs task force started looking for ways God wanted the congregation to reach out into the community in a practical way. Originally, the thought was to grow a garden to provide food for the needy.

First Church member Tina Waller spearheaded the task force and worked diligently to make the garden happen. "There's a big sunny field across the street from the church that the church owns and wasn't being used," Waller said. "With the economy like it is, it just seemed like a good time to do something like this."

"We weren't sure how many people would get involved, if any, but we thought we could just raise produce and take the excess to our community help center if nothing else."

As it turned out, the community responded in a big way. All 30 of the garden plots currently are claimed and more people want to know how to get involved. As the garden grows, so are the relationships among the neighbors. Twenty-one of the 30 plots are being used by people who are not members of First Church.

One of those individuals is Laura Gore, who has lived in the area about three years. "I love the community aspect of the garden," said Gore, who has enjoyed sharing radishes with her co-workers. "We're helping each other by taking care of each other's plots when we're away, and we're meeting our neighbors and coming together more."

Gore, who has visited several churches in the area but doesn't have a church home, said that now when she walks her dog in the neighborhood, she speaks to more of her neighbors and stops and shares with them along the way.

Most of those participating in the garden are novices, so Waller brought in master gardeners and representatives of the Davidson County Extension Office. They also have offered classes on composting and other gardening techniques and plan to follow those up

with classes on canning and preserving.

Most of the homes in Old Hickory are located close together and, as a result, not many of the residents have a suitable garden location. That has contributed to the success of the church's community garden.

Cindy Hudson, who moved to Old Hickory two years ago from Los Angeles, said she has no sunlight in her yard. "I just love the community spirit of all this," said Hudson, who grew up in a Baptist church but no longer attends. "It's so much fun. Every time I come here, there's somebody else working, and we stop and share about what we're doing and tell each other what's going on."

Heather Thorneberry had never gardened in her life, but as the mother of a 21-month-old child she's become more interested in organic products.

"I'm originally from Ohio, so I had to plant corn," she said.

Thorneberry, who attends the Old Hickory Church of Christ, said she called her mother to learn more about what she should plant and how. Her mother suggested the "three sister's mix" — a stalk of corn with beans growing up the stalk and squash planted at the base. Thorneberry was excited to see four-inch ears of corn on her stalks.

In fact, everyone's excited, according to James Askins, who has lived in the community about three years and is a member of the church's task force. "I'm here about two times a day, and there's always someone here working and it's just fun to stop and share with each other," he said.



GROWING MINISTRY — Tina Waller (left) and James Askins, members of the community needs task force of First Church, Old Hickory, Tenn., examine the "fruit" of their labor in the church's community garden. (BP photo)

About twice a week, Askins runs a water hose from the church and fills the two water tanks that were donated for the garden. Each tank takes about an hour to fill. "One of the guys who's got a plot here is a friend of someone in our fire department," Askins said. "They've actually volunteered to come over and start filling up our tanks. It's exciting to me to see the community spirit that this small piece of land has generated."

Waller, who was laid off in March, has worked hard to solicit the community's support. She worked to get the water tanks donated, as well as a composter, wood chips, and landscape fabric. As the garden started blooming, she and others worked on a fence to keep out four-legged critters.

Askins has been doing his own pest control naturally by combining garlic and hot pepper sauce and spraying it around the garden. "It irritates the critters," he said.

One Thursday night, as many of the gardeners were tending their plots, Askins was telling them about an upcoming blood drive at the church.

"I'll be there," one gardener hollered across her plot. "I'm O-negative." "Me too," said another.

The church is out to change the community "one tomato at a time," Waller said.

*Editor's note: For more information about First Baptist, Old Hickory's garden ministry, visit [fbcoh.org](http://fbcoh.org) and click on the community garden link.*

## China research highlights promise of pluripotent stem cells

WASHINGTON (BP) — Researchers in China have shown that induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells are as powerful as embryonic stem cells while avoiding their ethical problems.

Scientists in Shanghai and Beijing revealed July 23 they had created live mice from the skin cells of adult animals after reprogramming the cells into an embryonic-like state, *The Washington Post* reported.

Their research produced at least 100 first-generation mice and hundreds of second-generation ones that were almost genetic matches for mice from which the iPS cells were extracted, according to *The Post*.

"This clearly says for the first time that iPS cells pass the most stringent test," said Konrad Hochedlinger, a Harvard University stem cell researcher, according to *The Post*.

Many scientists have promoted embryonic stem cell research because stem cells from embryos are pluripotent, meaning they can transform into any cell or tissue in the body. Embryonic stem cell research, however, not only has failed to provide any therapies for human subjects, but it has been plagued by the development of tumors in lab animals.

With the publication of these studies in the journals *Nature* and *Cell Stem Cell*, iPS cells

have been confirmed also to be pluripotent. Unlike embryonic stem cell research, iPS research does not involve embryos and is supported by pro-lifers.

The research is good news, and potentially bad news, a Southern Baptist bioethicist said.

"These experiments continue to demonstrate that the destruction of embryos is unnecessary to retrieve stem cells," said C. Ben Mitchell, Graves professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

"So, in that sense, this is good news. And we can make all the mice we want using the procedure.

"The problems arise when these findings are applied to

human research," said Mitchell, who is a consultant for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"It would be unethical to subject human embryos to potentially deadly experiments just to see if they work. The only ethical justification for experimenting on an unborn human being is for that person's own good."

"Dr. Oz" of Oprah fame told a nationwide TV audience he believes the "stem cell debate is

dead" because of the promise of iPS research.

In addition to iPS stem cells, adult stem cells provide an ethical alternative and have produced therapies for at least 73 ailments in human subjects, according to Do No Harm, a coalition promoting ethics in research. Such results have been achieved even though adult stem cells are considered multipotent, meaning they can convert into many but not all cells or tissues in the body.

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# Missionary's widow recounts return to Philippines

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Instead of celebrating with flowers, chocolates, and a romantic dinner, International Mission Board (IMB) emeritus missionary Lyn Hyde spent her 43rd wedding anniversary alone.

On June 12, 1966, Lyn had vowed to love, honor and cherish her husband, fellow IMB missionary Bill, until death parted them. In 2003, as Bill and other IMB missionaries huddled in a crowded weather shelter at a Philippines airport during a downpour, a terrorist's exploding bomb did just that. Bill was killed, and members of the missionary family he was there to greet were seriously injured.

As she sat on an airplane following her husband's body back to the United States, Lyn decided she would never return to the Philippines. God had a different plan and began impressing on Lyn's heart the story of Joseph and how many trials he had to overcome.

"Even though he was sold

into slavery by his brothers, he was wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife, he was thrown into prison ... he never gave up," Lyn says.

"Even though he maybe did not understand why all this was happening, he still trusted and believed in his God. And so the Lord was teaching me."

"I may not understand why God allowed my husband to be killed by a bomb, but God understood and I could still trust Him and even though going back to the Philippines would not be easy, I could still trust that there was a purpose [in] going back and not to give up."

When Lyn returned to the mission field the following year, her new assignment was

helping train Filipinos to work in closed-access countries. It was during this time she found comfort in God's faithfulness to Joseph.

"God really used those passages in Genesis for taking me back to the Philippines and keeping me there on some of the days when I said 'I can't do it, God. I just can't be here,' she says. "I can't do what you are asking me to do."

Ironically, it was among the Filipinos that Lyn found closure. One Sunday evening,

she attended the worship service of a partnering Baptist church. The guest speaker, before giving his life over to the Lord, had made it his mission to kill Christians. He was following a legacy passed down from family members who were imams [Muslim leaders].

His message at church that night was about his conversion from Islam to Christianity.

Although the speaker had never met Lyn, "he just shot off that platform and came directly to me and grabbed my hands, and he said to me, 'Please forgive my people for what they did to you and to your family,'" she recalls. "I have killed Christians because I thought that was what I was supposed to do and many of those people, I have not ever been able to go back [to their families] and ask for forgiveness."

Lyn told the man she forgave him.

"[That was] one of those moments I knew that's why God called me back there — not only to give me some comfort, but to release this man from the things he had done before he knew Jesus Christ," she says.

"That was just something the Lord knew He needed to put in my life so there would at least be a face of one [former terrorist] that was sorry for having killed

my husband and taken away the father to my children. [God] enabled me to stay until He made it clear that He was releasing me from the Philippines to come back to America."

After 31 years of missionary service, Lyn retired in June 2009. She and Bill had dreamed of living in the mountains someday but put that dream on hold when they moved to the Philippines. Now, however, Lyn has made a home for herself in Colorado Springs, Co.

"As I was praying about when to retire and where to retire, the Lord just clearly led me that I was to follow that desire that my husband and I had — and that He has something special for me there. So I'm going to continue with that... I think Bill would be pretty happy."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS



Lyn Hyde



Bill Hyde

## Adoption supporters line up in opposition to new movie

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Adoption advocates are rallying to speak up for the world's orphans in light of a current Warner Brothers horror film that depicts a young adopted orphan girl as a murderer.

The movie *Orphan* hit theaters recently and tells the story of a couple who adopt a young girl named Esther from the local orphanage. She appears sweet at first but turns out to be, to put it mildly, a terror. The trailer shows her being picked on by school classmates and then, seconds later, on a murderous rampage.

One early version of the trailer, which apparently was pulled by Warner Brothers, ended with a despondent Esther saying, "It must be hard to love an adopted child as much as your own." The movie's promotional poster depicts the lead character, stone-faced and in pigtails, with the teaser title, "There's Something Wrong With Esther."

Adoption and orphan advocates fear the movie feeds what already is a natural concern on the part of some couples who are considering adoption, particularly of an older child. Those advocates also fear the movie could lead to some couples deciding altogether not to adopt.

To counter the movie, the Christian Alliance for Orphans launched a website, [OrphansDeserveBetter.org](http://OrphansDeserveBetter.org), with pictures of smiling orphans — a direct rebuttal of the movie poster — as well as orphan facts.

Playing off the movie's theme, the website shows a picture of a needy orphan with the headline, "There's Something Wrong With Millions of Children Having No Family." The website is urging Warner Brothers to contribute a part of the proceeds from the

movie to help orphans. It is also asking visitors to the website to submit their positive stories about orphans.

The United Nations estimates there are 145 million orphans in the world. There also are 130,000 children in the U.S. foster care system waiting to be adopted, the website says.

"[When] you imagine kids who are growing up without parents, they already have the wind in their faces and face great challenges. This just doesn't help them to be lumped in with all the horror figures of Hollywood lore," Jedd Medefind, president of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, said recently on the Albert Mohler radio program.

"It hurts them in another way, and that's fanning natural fears parents have about bringing an orphan in into their home, whether through adoption or foster care or otherwise. It could rob these kids of the one thing that they most need in the world, which is a loving family."

Biloxi native Russell D. Moore, dean of the school of theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the movie got him "riled up," even though he acknowledges he's not the kind of person who typically rails against Hollywood.

Moore and his wife adopted two boys from a Russian orphanage, and he recently wrote a book, *Adopted for Life*, which spotlights adoption.

"I think this movie is going to hurt kids," he said on the Mohler program while serving as guest host, "and I think the answer to this movie is not simply to rail against [it and say], 'Can you believe Hollywood's doing this?' Instead, it's listening to Hollywood and saying, 'OK, we understand the question that you're trying to pose, but we're going to give

you a different answer. We've seen a different story."

Jerry T. Haag, president of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, said his heart aches for adopted children who may see the movie's trailer. Moore said he struggled to explain the meaning behind the movie's poster when his two sons saw it.

"My concern is that adoptive children or children waiting to be adopt-

ed will face cruel jokes and ridicule from other children as a result of just seeing the previews," Haag wrote in a Baptist Press column. "I shudder to think that families considering adoption will be negatively influenced by unfounded fears."

The answer, Medefind said, is to tell the truth about adoption and orphans and to view the issue through a biblical lens.

"[Orphans have] often been through a lot. They come with great needs. Like anything worth doing, loving orphans can require sacrifice," he said. "...At the same time, statistically, if you look at the research, kids who are adopted do very, very well — in most cases as well and in some cases better than their peers. Study after study shows that kids who have been adopted succeed in school. They are emotionally well-adjusted. They feel as connected to their family as their non-adopted siblings."

Medefind added, "We want to raise the banner for the needs of orphans and the real joy found in loving them. Frankly, I believe that most of us need orphans perhaps even more than they need us. The church needs orphans, because it draws us to the heart of Christ when we extend ourselves beyond just selfish lives, beyond self-centered religion and truly live out the mandate of Christ to look after kids who have no one else in the world."

Moore said it's essential for Christians to keep the Gospel at the center of the discussion.

"It's not just a matter of rescuing children," he said. "It's a matter of seeing the Gospel and of living out the Gospel and of benefiting ourselves and our churches with what the Gospel is all about."



DEFENDING ORPHANS — The [OrphansDeserveBetter.org](http://OrphansDeserveBetter.org) website has posted several pictures to counter the horror movie *Orphan*'s promotional poster. (BP graphic)

# Christians remain under attack in India state of Orissa

NEW DELHI (BP) — Nearly 11 months after an unprecedented wave of anti-Christian attacks shook the eastern-India state of Orissa, a reign of terror continues in the region, with former rioters issuing death threats to witnesses.

Of more than 750 cases filed in various police stations in Orissa's Kandhamal and Gajapati districts, only one has resulted in a conviction. Some trials are underway amid reports of armed extremists threatening to kill witnesses.

Dibya Paricha, a clergyman in the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Catholic Archdiocese, said several witnesses are shrinking away to save their lives. On July 9, a witness in the village of Salapsahi refused to testify in a murder case.

"During the trial, the complainant, the younger brother of the victim, said he did not know anything about the case," Paricha, coordinator of the Christian Legal Association's (CLA) legal cell in Kandhamal, told Compass Direct News. "The previous day, he had said that he would tell the truth so that the culprits would be punished... From a reliable source, we came to know that he was threatened with death."

On June 30, three men carrying pistols — Sanjeeb Pradhan, Bikram Pradhan, and Pratap Pradhan — threatened witnesses in the Gondaguda area of Kandhamal, Paricha said.

The three men have been issuing death threats to witnesses through area villages, he said. "I know them [the three gunmen] personally," Paricha said. "They were living hand-to-mouth until recently, and now they are riding a motor vehicle and threatening the survivors."

Information on the threats has been provided to the sub-collector (an administrative

officer in charge of a sub-district), the sub-divisional police officer, and the district collector (administrative head), Paricha said, and a First Information Report has been registered at the local police station.

Another witness and complainant in an Orissa riot-related case, 55-year-old Batia Digal, was threatened June 17, Paricha said. Gobida Chandra Pradhan from the village of Piserama and Shricharan Mohan Pradhan from the village of Dodaingia tried to pressure Digal to withdraw the case, in which a local legislator from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Manoj Pradhan, is one of the accused.

The local police station is investigating the case.

On July 4, Christians saw a ray of hope when a fast-track court in Phulbani in the Kandhamal district convicted a tribal leader of arson — the first conviction in a 2008 violence case. The court sentenced 58-year-old Chakradhar Mallick to two years in prison and a fine of 1,000 rupees (US\$20).

Mallick had burned the house of a Christian, Loknath Digal, and threatened to kill him in August 2008.

The granting of bail to one of the prime suspects in numerous anti-Christian riot cases, local BJP legislator Pradhan of the G. Udayagiri assembly constituency, on July 6 dampened the spirits of Christians. Bail was granted for 15 days so that Pradhan could take his oath as a member of the new assembly, the Indo-Asian News Service reported.

Pradhan was arrested in October 2008 on various charges, including murder, rioting, and arson.

More than 100 people were killed in the spate of violence

that erupted in Orissa's Kandhamal district in August-September 2008. 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions were incinerated. The violence began following the assassination of a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council or VHP) leader, Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, by a Maoist, or extreme Marxist group.

Hindu nationalist groups blamed Christians for the assassination.

Only 26 murder cases, however, have been registered under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code. According to Christian Legal Association statistics, 13 cases were registered in the Raikia police station alone. Five complaints were filed in Tikabali, two each in G. Udayagiri, Sarangada, and Balliguda, and one each in Gocchapada and Phiringia.

At least nine cases were registered for attempted murder: four in Balliguda, two in G. Udayagiri and one each in Tumudibanda, Phulbani and Sarangada. Two rape cases were registered, one each in the Phulbani and Balliguda.

More than 550 cases have been filed for arson and looting: 323 in G. Udayagiri alone, 59 in Tikabali, 32 in Raikia, 31 in Gocchapada, 26 in Phulbani, 23 each in Phiringia and Balliguda, 18 in Daringbadi, 10 in Sarangada, four each in Tumudibanda and Kotagarh and three in Khajuripada.

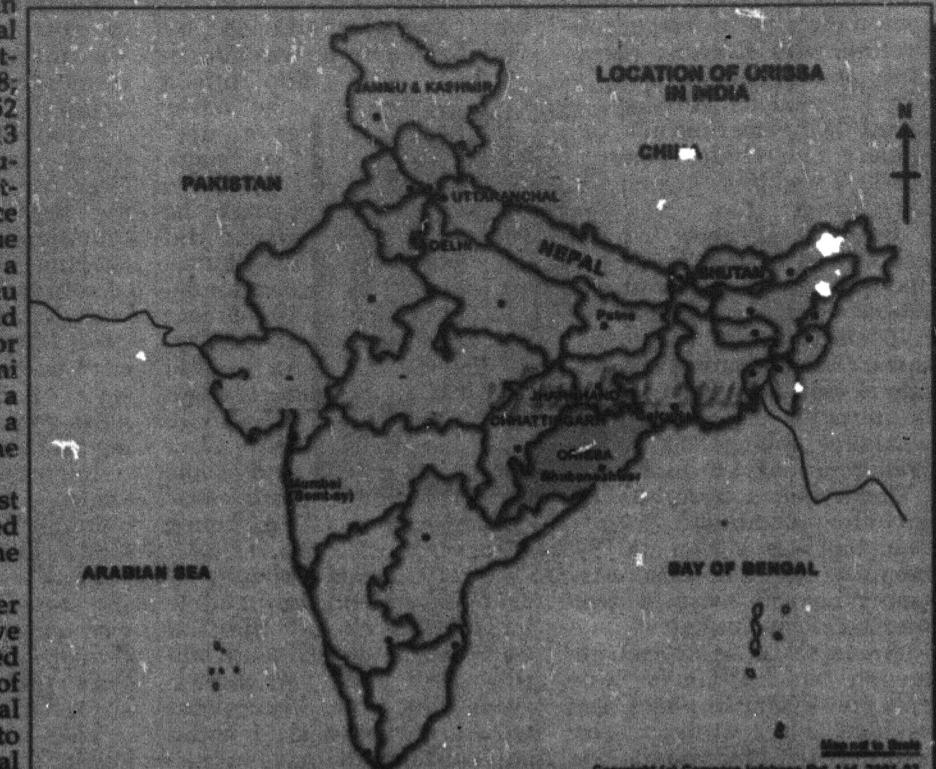
Some 680 people were arrested in the numerous cases, but some have managed to get bail from courts, according to The Deccan Herald newspaper.

The Christian Legal Association and a nonprofit group, the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), are providing free legal services to the victims and their relatives in Kandhamal.

In neighboring Gajapati district, which also faced numerous anti-Christian attacks in August-September 2008 as fallout from Saraswati's murder, the All India Christian Council (AICC), in partnership with the HRLN, is providing free legal aid to victims of the violence.

"At least 337 families lost homes or businesses [in Gajapati district]," Sam Paul, AICC spokesman, told Compass. "[However,] most rehabilitation as well as public attention has focused on Kandhamal district."

Commenting on the need



for legal help in Gajapati, Paul added, "On one single day [in June], the lawyers counseled and drafted petitions for 30 persons."

The AICC and HRLN also are helping the victims in Gajapati to receive compensation and recover lost identity cards and other documents.

Meanwhile, a judicial commission headed by Justice S.C. Mohapatra to probe the August-September 2008 violence submitted a 28-page interim report to Orissa's state government on July 1 without blaming any group or organization for the violence.

"Sources of the violence were deeply rooted in land disputes, conversion and re-conversion and fake certificate issues... Suspicion among the scheduled tribe and scheduled caste inhabitants of Kandhamal is the main cause of riots, with the tribals suspecting that Pana Dalits were capturing their land through fraudulent means,"

Mohapatra wrote, according to The Hindu newspaper.

Those belonging to the Kui tribe in Kandhamal are mostly Hindu. Christians make up an estimated 16% of the 650,000 people in the district, with more than 60% of them belonging to the Pana community and classified as "Scheduled Castes," better known as Dalits (formerly "untouchables").

The Pana community has been demanding recognition as a tribal community, as Dalits lose their right to government's affirmative action after they convert to Christianity. The Kui people, however, oppose the demand as it would increase the number of candidates eligible for government-reserved jobs. Some of the Kui believe that Pana

Dalits make fake certificates to get the land that can belong only to tribal people.

"I know it will take at least two years to complete inquiry, but the interim report will help the government to make immediate intervention," Mohapatra added.

Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Catholic Archdiocese told private channel Zee News, "Justice Mohapatra had given remarks on other matters without touching the subject for which the commission was set up, to investigate culpability in the series of attacks on Christians." Cheenath said conversion was "not at all" a factor behind the Kandhamal violence.

The National Commission for Minorities in October 2008 had accused the then-ruling state government, a coalition of a regional party, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the BJP, of not controlling the violence. It said that despite knowing that public reaction to the murder of a prominent religious leader like Laxmanananda would be extreme, there was little evidence of action by political and administrative higher-ups in Bhubaneswar. The Indian Express daily reported in October 2008.

In March 2009, the BJD broke its 11-year-old alliance with the BJP, saying it did not want to partner with a "communal" party. The BJD fought and won the April-May state assembly election alone.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik held the BJP and groups linked with it, such as the Hindu extremist VHP and its youth wing Bajrang Dal, responsible for the violence, according to private news channel CNN-IBN.

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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Have You Found Your Place?

Exodus 35:30-36:1; Jeremiah 1:4-8; Colossians 3:16-17

By Lori Clendinning

For eleven years my husband John served as your Sunday School Consultant at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Oftentimes, I was able to travel with him and visit many Baptist churches throughout our state. Sometimes I would see a favorite phrase posted above the sanctuary doors: "Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve."

That's a great reminder of what we, as believers and followers of Jesus, are to be focused on throughout our week. When we come to church, we should have a worshipful attitude, ready to sing, pray, and bless God in our Sunday services. However, when we leave the sanctuary, we should live as His church in the world: we serve God when we serve others

in Jesus' name.

God has a place for each believer that fulfills His will for us. Scripture tells us in I Corinthians 12:7 that He provides a spiritual gift to all who are surrendered to Jesus. He uses anyone who is open to His direction and willing to use the gifts, skills, and abilities He's provided. We honor Him by serving Him.

One of my favorite Old Testament passages is in Exodus 35 and 36, this week's lesson. If you've ever taken part in a church building program, this is the passage you'll want your church to study beforehand!

With a radiant face that shone with God's glory, Moses followed God's command to instruct the whole Israelite community. First, everyone was reminded that they were to

work six days, and to observe a holy day, a Sabbath of rest on the seventh day.

Undoubtedly, this time of reflection also served to build some expectancy among God's family.

Next, Moses declared that everyone who was willing was to bring an offering of anything that was on the materials list for the tabernacle: gold, silver, bronze, yarn, linen, skins, wood, oil, spices, gems, and jewels. A lengthy list, but it was inclusive of every member's ability to give something. From the wealthiest Israelite to the least prosperous, God enabled them all to have something to give. The only stipulation was that they be willing to give to His great cause.

Then, Moses asked that everyone who was skilled was to come together to make the list of items the Lord required for His tabernacle. This list was also very long and broad, indeed, not a job for a few, but for many. Able to spin yarn? Cut wood?

Sew curtains or weave priestly robes? There was a place for everyone who had the skills and was willing to share them for the Lord's work.

Two craftsmen, Bezalel (BEHZ uh lehl) and Oholiab (oh HOH lih ab) were selected to oversee the skilled workers. Previously mentioned in Exodus 31 when God told Moses of his ability to serve Him, Bezalel was particularly gifted to make artistic designs in gold, silver, and bronze. He was also skilled in woodwork and stonework, and Oholiab was hand-picked by God to assist him in directing all of the volunteers' efforts.

Fully rested, directed, and well aware that their leader was hearing from God, the Bible tells us that "everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the Lord." (Ex. 35:21)

Hallelujah, that's not the end of the story! Moses was told (Ex. 36:5) that "the people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."

Moses had to give an order to restrain the people from bringing more because they had already brought enough. My! What a problem to have!

It's exhilarating to see the church come together, and that's exactly what happened to Moses and the Israelites! With willing hands and hearts that are moved by God, what is more beautiful than brothers and sisters in Christ who have found their place of service? We must all use our God-given abilities to serve Him in the church AND out in the world.

Whatever your skill level or ability to give may be, pursue His divine calling. Don't allow feelings of inadequacy to keep you from obeying God's call. All of us have the assurance of God's sustaining presence when we respond to His call. Honor Him in every aspect of your daily life, allowing Christ to rule.

May we all find our place in Him this week!

*Clendinning is a member of First Baptist Church, Brandon.*

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Show Me Your Faith

James 2:14-26

By Jim Burnett

What is the primary task of the church today? Most Christians would answer this question with a quick recitation of The Great Commission given by our Lord to win the lost. Yet as we look around us where are the converts? Where are the changed lives?

Could it be that we must relearn as the church that before we can share our faith and expect results we must show our faith? God's grace must be shown through our actions before it can be effectively shared through our words. We as Southern Baptists are solid in our doctrines, but where we often come up short is in our deeds. Where is the proof to the truth we espouse?

Are you as a Christian demonstrating the love of Christ in a tangible way to

coworkers, friends, and family members? Is your church being a blessing to the community surrounding it? What many people today need from Christians is not more preaching at them but more ministry unto them.

#### Just Talking (James 2:14-17)

We are taught by Paul in the New Testament that believers constitute the body of Christ. Some of us are hands; others are feet; some are ears; others are eyes, etc. Just as every limb of the human body has a purpose and a task, so it is with Christians being the spiritual body of Christ. The problem, however, is that too many of God's children want to be the lips of Christ. Consequently, faith is reduced to words that never materialize into actions. Our lips are moving, but less

Burnett

and less ministry is being done.

James defines a religion of words as a useless religion. If our faith in Christ fails to move us to care for others and meet their needs, then can it truly be a

Christian faith? Our lips may be moving but human need continues to go unmet. Let us be like Jesus who put walk behind His talk and works behind His words: "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19 NIV).

#### Just Believing (James 2:18-20)

Can a person really be saved by simply believing in Christ? Absolutely! But the kind of belief required to be saved incorporates the head and the heart. In verse 19, James reminds us of a sobering reality: demons believe in God, but they are not saved. These fallen angels, who followed

Lucifer in the heavenly rebellion against God, today acknowledge God's existence, but obviously their intellectual ascent is inadequate to save them from eternal damnation. They believe in God, yet they do the works of Satan.

How can a person know he or she is saved? Paul tells us there are specific changes that occur: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV). Clearly there is a change in our behavior, moving us from self-centered living to Christ-centered living. And when Christ is Lord of our lives he will not only affect what we believe but how we behave.

#### Justifying Faith (James 2:21-26)

James reminds us that what we do for Christ validates our trust in Christ. Faith in God motivates us to obey God. For example, Abraham's faith led him to one of the mountains of Moriah to fulfill God's command to sacrifice his son. Rahab the harlot demonstrated faith in God by hiding the Hebrew

spies from the Jericho authorities. Thus Abraham's and Rahab's actions proved that indeed their trust was in God.

Jesus taught us that faith and deeds work in tandem when He said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (Jn. 14:15 NIV). Obedience always follows faith just as lighting follows thunder. There is no rain on earth without both the thunder and the lightning, and there is no reign of God in our hearts without both faith and works.

What is your trust level in the Lord these days? Is your life full of faith and your faith full of life? Are you fulfilling your role as "...God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works?" (Ephes. 2:10 NIV). James reminds us that it is inconceivable for a Christian to be void of good works. In fact, he says a faith absent of action is dead just as the body without the spirit is dead.

*Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.*

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms furnished by the newspaper. All articles must be received at least two weeks before they will be accepted via the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

# Record

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where, details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital prints are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) email, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mcb.org.

# Analysis: Is Southern Baptist Convention in decline?

By Will Hall, executive editor  
Baptist Press

First of a two-part series

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — In April of this year, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Annual Church Profile (ACP) was released showing a decline in membership (down two-tenths of one percent). It was the second drop in a row and the fourth in SBC history.

The ACP report also showed the fourth consecutive year of decline in baptisms, recording the lowest total (342,198) since 1987 (338,495). Southern Baptists baptized 376,085 in 1950, and in the 58 years since (through 2008), reached a high of 445,725 in 1972 and a low of 336,050 in 1978, and not too long ago, experienced four consecutive years in which baptisms topped 400,000 (1997-2000).

What do these numbers mean? Is the Southern Baptist Convention in decline or is something else at work?

From 1961 through 1998, Southern Baptist Convention churches grew in membership 59%, from 9,978,000 to 15,851,356, while mainline churches' memberships collapsed:

- Methodists fell from 11,709,629 to 8,500,000 (down 27 percent)
- Episcopalians dropped by 28%, 3,500,000 to 2,500,000
- The Presbyterian Church USA registered 4,000,000 members in 1965 and in 1999 numbered 2,600,000, a decrease of about 36%

• Membership in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) declined precipitously, from 1,800,000 to 879,000, or 51%

Conventional wisdom said liberal theology and ecumenism were the causes for mainline churches to decline, and in 2002 the Catholic-affiliated Glenmary Research Center Institute confirmed this notion. (<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=14339>).

Recently, other denominations labeled as conservative have continued their growth according to the latest edition of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, published by the liberal National Council of Churches.

So why the drop in SBC membership? What could be the cause for anemic growth the last decade? Could non-spiritual factors be constricting baptisms? Are there influences in play that might affect both baptisms and growth?

## Membership

Since 1998, when the SBC experienced its first decline in membership in the modern era, membership in SBC churches has shown signs of leveling off:

- 1999 - 15,851,756, up .78%.
- 2000 - 15,960,308, up .68%.
- 2001 - 16,052,920, up .58%.
- 2002 - 16,137,736, up .53%.
- 2003 - 16,205,050, up .42%.
- 2004 - 16,267,494, up .39%.
- 2005 - 16,270,315, up .02%.
- 2006 - 16,306,246, up .22%.
- 2007 - 16,266,920, down .24%.
- 2008 - 16,228,438, down .2%.

In isolation, the ACP data might be interpreted to suggest the SBC is a denomination in decline. However, when ACP information is examined against research conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, it is evident that demographic changes in our country have been the major shaping force of our membership numbers, not outdated methodologies nor a generation gap in the leadership of our churches and institutions.

The data show that membership and baptism figures are in large part the prod-

ucts of a declining birthrate among whites as well as the suburbanization of America. This is not to say such demographics hold sway over the power of the Gospel. It does suggest that if we are to continue to grow, we need to shift our church planting strategy in order to give us the best chance of sharing the Gospel with the lost.

Consider, for example, the trend in figures for the white population in the U.S. It should not surprise many that the SBC is predominately an Anglo fellowship. This is not to demean the vital and intentional efforts to improve the ethnic diversity of our fellowship (more data will follow below), but in terms of "marketing" a message, until recently, the SBC essentially pegged its success in growth to the reaching of one segment of the U.S. population (Until 1951, we restricted ourselves to being a "Southwide" denomination).

The growth in this target market boomed following World War II, but now has begun to taper off in terms of real growth. Now, with a birthrate of 1.9 live births per Anglo woman, meaning "fewer births than needed to replace the mother and father in the population," the white, non-Hispanic population in America is expected to peak and then fall, actually declining in number after 2030. Here is how it is trending:

- 1960 - 158.8 million
- 1970 - 169.0 million (10.2 million increase)
- 1980 - 180.3 million (11.3 million increase)
- 1990 - 188.1 million (7.8 million increase)
- 2000 - 194.6 million (6.5 million increase)
- 2008 - 199.8 million (5.2 million increase)

Growth in SBC membership has followed a similar trend, booming in the 1950s through the 1990s, adding by decade, respectively, 2.65 million, 1.9 million, 2.0 million, 1.14 million and 0.9 million. In the past eight years, a net gain of 268,130 members has been added to the rolls ([http://www.bpnews.net/pdf/SBCM\\_embership.pdf](http://www.bpnews.net/pdf/SBCM_embership.pdf) — Figure 1, p. 1, J. Clifford Tharp, Jr., "Reflections on Southern Baptist Membership").

A quantitative analysis will confirm what is evident by sight from comparing the two graphs. The trends for the white, non-Hispanic population in the U.S. and for the SBC's membership pretty much share the same path.

The other demographic shift that is greatly impacting the SBC's growth is the tremendous migration that is occurring in the U.S. — by those already within her borders.

In 1950, about 56.1% of the population lived in a metropolitan area (central city plus suburb), but by 2000, there had been a surge to 80.3% who lived in these larger concentrations.

By contrast, in 1950, SBC churches were found primarily in the cities and countryside of the South, and as of 2000, nearly 50% of SBC churches still were located outside of metropolitan areas and also found mostly in the South.

What seems to emerge from all the information is that the answer has less to do with a new methodology of how to do church, and more to do with "location, location, location!"

This is not to suggest that the churches in rural areas are not vital or viable or vibrant. There are believers in rural America who still need to be discipled and receive ministering, and who are needed to reach out to the lost who continue to

populate all areas of the U.S., including rural counties.

Moreover, these are the congregations who have been faithful partners with each other, year in and year out, in supporting Southern Baptist ministries — local, state, and national.

However, if 80% of the population now lives in a metropolitan area, the SBC needs to place greater emphasis on an intentional and coordinated plan for church planting in these populated places.

Likewise, if the population of whites is declining as a percent of the total population, shouldn't the SBC be doing more to reach minority groups?

From 2000 to 2004, one in two new Americans was Hispanic, and the Census Bureau predicts by 2050, Hispanics will compose 30% of the U.S. population (more than doubling from 15% in 2008) and that the black population will grow during the same time frame from 14 to 15%. Asians will increase from 5.1 to 9.2%. By contrast, whites will decrease in proportion from 66 to 46%.

In the end, does all this information add up to a denomination in decline?

Not necessarily.

In fact, in regard to increasing the diversity of ethnics within our ranks, the SBC seems to have turned the ship or at least is seeing the bow swing in the right direction.

In 1998, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention recorded that there were 44,949 churches and church-type missions in the SBC, 6,048 (or 13%) self-identified as predominately ethnic and 38,901 predominately Anglo. Membership was calculated at 637,934 (ethnic) and 14,700,709 (Anglo), respectively.

By 2005, Anglo congregations had grown by 1,267, representing an increase in membership of 364,367. Meanwhile, ethnic churches had surged by 2,668 in numbers and 567,524 in members!

Note that because information is not captured about individual members, it is not possible to know the exact ethnic composition in the SBC membership. Some Anglo congregations have large numbers of ethnic members. Likewise, ethnic congregations would include at least some who would call themselves "Anglo."

In the three largest groups of predominantly ethnic churches:

- African American congregations jumped more than 59% in number (1,131) with an accompanying membership increase of nearly 118% (410,524).

- Hispanic churches swelled by 852 (43%) and membership surged by 61,438 (or about 54%).

- Asian assemblies grew in actual numbers by 393, or 34% growth, and in real membership by 60,429, or a whopping 77%.

- In just seven years, ethnic membership burgeoned from 4.2% of SBC membership to 7.4% of the men, women, boys, and girls within our churches.

More work is needed in order to ensure Southern Baptists are reaching the population within our "Jerusalem and Judea," but these numbers bode well for the future growth of our convention.

Moreover, Southern Baptists should be heartened by other research, both from Christian as well as secular sources. A 2001 Southern Seminary study reported that eight out of 10 of the unchurched participants interviewed for this seven-year study said they would accept an invitation to church if asked.

The 2007 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey reported that unaffiliated adults make up 16% of the population, but also found that among those who were raised unaffiliated (agnostics, atheists, and those who don't identify with any religion), fewer than half remain unaffiliated — meaning more than half are open to religion.

A 2009 report from LifeWay Christian Resources about unchurched young adults stated that "20-somethings" are more open than their older counterparts to hear more about Christianity and that they are more connected to historic Christian beliefs.

With this good news combined with information about the changing U.S. population, it's easy to see the remedy for restoring the health and growth of the SBC is as simple as following the Apostle Paul's model of taking the message to where the crowds already are gathered. If not, "How can they hear?"

## Baptisms

Suburbanization and the slowing growth in the population of white, non-Hispanics exert the same pressures on baptism numbers that they do on membership numbers. However, baptism numbers have been particularly impacted as well by the dramatic and sustained lack of live births in America.

Historically, Southern Baptists have been particularly successful in evangelizing youth and pre-adults, typically reaching in descending order nine to 11-year-olds, six to eight-year-olds and 12-17-year-olds. However, according to research compiled in 2009 by NAMB's Philip B. Jones, there has been a noticeable shift in the age groups reached most often by Southern Baptists.

In 1971, 68% of new believers baptized by Southern Baptists were 18 years old or younger. By 1983, that number had dropped to 53% and has stabilized at about 55% since. What explains such a shift?

Jones explained in his 2000 study that "increases or decreases of baptisms in any age group are more a function of population shifts in the United States than of change in the way Southern Baptist churches are emphasizing or implementing evangelism."

In other words, smaller target populations in the younger age groups meant fewer conversions and fewer baptisms among those 18 years old and younger.

In fact, it is remarkable that Southern Baptists have been able to remain fairly steady in baptisms for so long, given the long-term decline in live births in the U.S. and at least three contractions (1950, 1990 and 2000) in the five to 19-year-old population that historically has been the most fruitful for Southern Baptists' evangelistic efforts (<http://www.bpnews.net/pdf/AmericansByAge.pdf> — Figure 2.4, p. 56, Census Bureau, "Demographic Trends in the 20th Century.")



Hall